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ABSTRACT

This paper gives an overview of the creative writing program at BOCES III Institute for Gifted and Talented Youth during the 1974 and 1975 summer sessions. There were five major activity areas in the workshop: training in sensory awareness; writing, accompanied by criticism and revision; editing and publishing a book; literary analysis; and writing and performing drama. Various games, activities, and instructional techniques and materials for helping the students become proficient in each of these areas are described. The three appendixes include such materials as lesson plans, assignments, and samples of student work. (TS)

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AD ASTRA: CREATIVE WRITING FOR THE GIFTED SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENT

Carole Marks Schulkind

"It was midnight on Haldon Avenue. Near the curb, a sparrow lay dead. The night wind shuddered. Three flights up, Cordelia Hernandez lay on her bed."[1] So wrote Barbara Zipser when she was 16 and a student of mine during 1974 at the BOCES Institute for Gifted and Talented Youth where I teach Creative Writing and act as Consultant for Humanities programs. This story, which Barbara begins so well, was rejected for the student-written anthology, Stained Glass. Rewritten by Barbara, it was later published in Scholastic Scope. Barbara sent me a signed copy, writing, "I hope this is just a beginning. Love, Barbara."

For some, it will be, for BOCES III, Suffolk County, Long Island, has had the imagination to tap our most valuable resource, our gifted young. By providing them with a setting, a challenging course of study, and the stimulation of a creative and gifted peer group, the Institute encourages gifted youth to realize their full potential. At the same time, the Institute serves as a teaching model for educators interested in adapting the programs to their own classroom needs.

As an educator, I feel fulfilled and rewarded by my participation in what is surely a beginning for some students. I also feel appalled by the fact that other students may return to educational settings

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where, thwarted by peer pressure not to perform and unstimulated by programs geared to anything but the Gifted, they will either find other outlets for their creativity or allow their natural talents to atrophy.

Althouch BOCES III Institute for Gifted and Talented Youth is a pilot program and holds classes five days a week for only four weeks, it accomplishes much during its short summer session. This article attempts to give an overview of one area of the program, Creative Writing, during the 1974 and 1975 sessions.

Prior to the opening session, consultants in special areas meet several times with Mr. Arthur Sullivan, Director of Planning and Evaluation, and Mr. Joseph Bucci, Principal of the Institute, to plan programs for the Humanities sessions, which are for all students, and to provide interface among the disciplines. The individual programs are then planned with the interdisciplinary approach in mind, and vice versa. This is done to maximize student interaction and to provide a forum for input and creative exchange among faculty. The results have been highly successful, with strong individual programs and some unusual combinations of interdisciplinary studies. For example, during one session, the Creative Writing class combined with the Chinese class to discuss Chinese poetry. Another time Creative Writing combined with Philosophy to discuss both the

philosophical and literary aspects of Sophocles' Antigone. One big project involved both Creative Writing and Photography in the publication of a book of poems, Dawn is at 5 AM.

If the pre-planning aspect is essential to the success of an interdisciplinary program for the Gifted, it is no less important for a course in Creative Writing. As Creative Writing is individualized by nature, a course must be designed to accommodate this characteristic. Thus, each of my courses began with the mailing of questionnaires to the students.[2] On the strength of these, I was able to give each student an individualized reading list, to choose literary works appropriate for class study, and to plan a course of study which would allow flexibility according to needs and capabilities while providing a structured, disciplined, goal-oriented framework.

There were five major activity areas:

1. Training in sensory awareness.
2. Writing, accompanied by criticism and revision.
3. Editing and publishing a book.
4. Literary analysis.
5. Drama: writing and performance.

Sensory training workshops are an important prerequisite for a course of this type in the Secondary School. Sense training can provide a focus for initial writing assignments which can form the basis for more complex work while increasing the student's vocabulary.

Additionally, by concentrating on sensitivity to details in the environment, the workshops can help break down traditional, rigid patterns of student-teacher response and promote an informal atmosphere conducive to creativity.

I began sense training even before classes started by including a first assignment with the mailed questionnaire, and by giving initial instructions on orientation night. Students were asked to bring several articles to class which related to different sensory areas, and indeed, in many cases, overlapped.[3] The objects they brought provided several subtle clues as to what type of persons they were, what kinds of homes they came from, and what they had in common with the interests of other students in the class.

In addition to the listed items, students brought some fascinating objects for sensory study. Among these were: a carving of a Balinese dancer, a Chinese gong, a sheaf of wheat, and a music box enclosed in a transparent case. The latter was to develop into a poem as the outgrowth of a student's increased awareness of the visual aspect of our complicated sensory equipment.[4]

The first workshop was <u>sound</u>. Prior to the first session, I had installed a variety of contemporary literary magazines in the classroom. Students perused these for the first hour, and then read sound-aware descriptions to the rest of the class. I also

read aloud selections from Joyce, Poe, and an exceptionally sensitive article from Sail magazine. "The sounds were waiting to be heard," it said.[5]

During the actual workshop, students wore blindfolds, something I insist upon during my sound workshops to avoid the distraction of vision, which is the most overpowering sense.[6] I then manipulated the objects they had brought and waited for responses.

The students had been instructed to call out sense words and phrases which were special to sound and which described the sound with the greatest degree of accuracy. After a few minutes, the students started to find out that this was serious fun and they began to drop their inhibitions. I was regaled with descriptions like "dulcet and mellow reverberations", cloying tunes of gadgetry", and "a thin metallic rush of loose chinks". This was done for a solid hour, in which I also asked the students to listen for inner voices, imagine themselves falling asleep or under water, to hear sounds with their ears cupped, to listen to their heartbeats, and to listen for breathing. By the end of the hour, these bright students, who seem to accept the roar of the hi-fi in public places and the mindless nattering of the omnipresent T.V., were creating sounds for each other and discovering worlds of subtlety.

The workshop was followed by a writing session. Students were told to concentrate on a single sound, or related groups of sounds, describing them so accurately that the reader could hear them.

The writing session was followed by a criticism session. Criticism is a vital part of any program in Creative Writing for the Secondary School and it cannot be stressed too much. This is usually a very weak area in a writing course because students have been trained to write for the teacher. I felt that it was important to avoid this tendency, and broke the class into groups with four or five students assigned to the same group for the entire sense-training period. After writing, students criticized each other's writing. The question of good, helpful criticism arose here, and I gave a short lecture on what to look for and how valid criticism consists of making constructive and concrete suggestions and pointing out specific weaknesses.

All papers were read by every person in the group. Comments were made on separate sheets of paper, which I call cover sheets, to encourage variations in points of view, and to foster honesty in response. The papers were discussed within the group, and then revised if the author also judged the criticism to be valid.

During this time, I pulled students out for short individual conferences, for which they signed up each day as they entered the

room. In this way, I had feedback, and the student received professional, as well as peer, instruction.

At the end of the criticism session, all papers, including originals, cover sheets with criticisms, and revisions, were handed in to me. These papers were graded with temporary grades to encourage further revision. I also read the criticisms. At first, some of these were general and it was necessary for me to criticize the criticisms. This was ameliorated because the sessions are oriented towards constructivism, hard work, and self-discipline. Students learned to appreciate one another's attention and a close, working atmosphere was soon established, with a concentration on the characteristics of the writing rather than the characteristics of the writer.

Sessions in the BOCES III Institute are three hours each, with the fourth hour devoted to a Humanities session, usually a large group meeting. Each teacher is therefore able to call breaks as he or she wishes. This enables us to concentrate for long periods of time. It should be noted that although the same research-workshop-writing sequence can be followed through in 45 minute periods over several weeks, some of the intensity and compression may be lost. With this in mind, I arranged Workshop 2, Vision, for Day 2, and accelerated to three workshops on Day 3: Touch, Taste, Smell, with Day 4 devoted to assessment and regrouping.

Day 2 began with reading of visually oriented writing. This is easy to find, but it is not enough to say that something is visual. A visual impression is conveyed through many facets of observation. Witness this passage from Katherine Anne Porter's, "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall":

> Her eyes opened very wide and the room stood out like a picture she had seen somewhere. Dark colors with the shadows rising towards the ceiling in long angles. The tall black dresser gleamed with nothing on it but John's picture, enlarged from a little one, with John's eyes very black when they should have been blue. You never saw him, so how do you know how he looked? But the man insisted the copy was perfect, it was very rich and handsome. For a picture, yes, but it's not my husband. The table by the bed had a linen cover and a candle and a crucifix. The light was blue from Cornelia's silk lampshades. No sort of light at all, just frippery. You had to live forty years with kerosene lamps to appreciate honest electricity. She felt very strong and she saw Doctor Harry with a rosy nimbus around him.[7]

There are several kinds of visual observation here: color, reflection, size, shape, clarity, light, comparison, interpretation, and so on.

The object of the workshop was to prompt the students to describe and be aware of all of these aspects of visual observation. Students studied their hands for shape, described colors of objects, changed their fields of vision using empty toilet paper rolls, observed objects through crinkled cellophane, used mirrors to single out parts of bodies, and so forth, for a full hour. This was followed by writing and criticism after a refreshment break, as on Day 1.

Day 3 had three workshops of thirty minutes each, followed by writing, with the first hour of Day 4 devoted to criticism.

The Touch workshop concerned softness, fragility, temperature, elasticity, texture, weight, and density. In addition to objects, students used their own bodies and each other. Planes and angles of the facial features were described with the fingers. Messages were conveyed by touch, with eyes closed, with students changing messages and touch partners frequently. Instructions were given on how to keep in touch with the self: feeling the blood flow, the air inside the lungs, the heaviness and/or lightness of the bones, becoming a tiny speck, becoming gigantic, tensing muscles, relaxing muscles.

The Taste workshop was great fun. Students tasted their fingers and teeth, some foods they had brought, and the air through a straw in different parts of the room. They were instructed to describe, not by "sweet" and "sour" but by very specific words like "candied" and "acidulous". Additionally, partners were taken. One partner was blindfolded while the other gave samples from a box full of spices and flavorings which I had brought. The partners switched places every few minutes. Needless to say, the water fountain outside the classroom was put to constant use while discoveries were made and vocabulary grew apace.

The Smell workshop began with all kinds of smells: pencils, wet newspaper, soap, incense, mothballs, caladryl, and others. Again, students were paired. One student was blindfolded while the partner chose an experience, simulating the experience with olfactory stimuli. One student chose a hospital, another a political gathering, another a party. Then partners switched places. In addition to describing the smells, students were asked to describe their emotions during the simulated smell experiences. The workshop was followed by writing. In most cases, students wrote about the simulated experiences.

Day 4 was divided into three sections. The first hour was devoted to revision using the original group. After a break, I had the students switch to new groups based on the senses: auditory, visual, tactile, olfactory, and gustatory. A student signed up for the group in his/her strongest sense, with a maximum of five to a group. The reordering helped students to communicate with some new faces, it gave them confidence in their own judgment, and it helped prepare them for the assumption of editorial duties for the class anthology.

The classroom had been arranged with large tables and chairs to provide maximal flexibility for group and individual work, and tables were labeled with the senses. Students distributed their

papers at the appropriate stations and then proceeded to read through all the papers for the best examples of sense imagery.

During the last hour students read the best papers aloud and analyzed the reasons for their choices. Two of these papers are reproduced here:

Touch Description by Colleen Crawford, Class of 1975

> Astride this magnificent bay stallion, I feel the hearty chest vibrating with every breath. The beautifully arched silken neck supports a bristly mane that causes my fingertips to tingle. The reins I hold are coarse and rough, and grating against my skin. During a short, swift gallop into the biting wind, tears spring to my stinging eyes. After coming to a sliding halt, which makes the blood surge to my head, I can feel his heaving sides and pounding heart. A clinging, slimy sweat breaks out over his entire body as he prances toward home with nervous, skittish little steps. His powerful and bulging muscles and tendons make me feel inferior to his overwhelming grandeur. Back at the corral I feel rejuvenated. Reluctantly dismounting, I feel the solid earth beneath my feet once again.

Sight Description by Debbie Norman, Class of 1974

> Upon entering, I was greeted by a large ceramic tiger, whose emerald eyes glistened with mischief. They seemed to stalk me as if they were alive, held captive within the figure. The hall was panelled in long, weathered strips of dark teak, shaped by a life left behind in the forest. The floor was a cushion of green-gold, thick and plush, letting your feet sink an inch deep. Plants of every possible species

> overflowed. They hung from crevices, hid in vases. They seemed to creep silently, awaiting their conquest. The aroma of these exotic plants overcame me. Acting as a potent drug it mesmerized me into a false state of tranquillity. I became their prisoner, not wishing to leave. Suddenly I reached the end of the hall and turned into the sterile stainless steel kitchen. My dream shattered.

Both exercises were later incorporated into pieces for the class anthologies. The poem and the story are reproduced for the reader's convenience in the appendix to this article.

In 1974, the class wrote a book of short stories, with one story per student. Entitled Stained Glass, because there were students of all colors in Creative Writing, it was mimeographed, collated, and distributed entirely by students, assisted by the secretarial staff in BOCES and West Babylon High School, who helped with the nasty machines. Copies were sold for $1.00 each, with proceeds going towards a trip to the theatre and dinner out on a Sunday afternoon in Greenwich Village.

In 1975, some of the sense experiences were incorporated into poems for the class book, Dawn is at 5 AM. This was printed, with photographs by the Photography Class, and sold to underwrite the cost of a class trip to the Museum of Modern Art in New York City to see the Glazer exhibit on graphics.

But the stories and poems did not arise full-blown out of sense exercises. This was another unit and it began with some serious reading, discussion, and critical analysis.

Class discussions in 1974 were based on D.H. Lawrence's "The Horse Dealer's Daughter"; in 1975 on William Blake's "London", Robert Browning's "Porphyria's Lover", and T.S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock". In both sessions, further literary selections were based on the background and ability of the class. This covered a wide range and all students were grouped according to preference. The short story selections were:

"Young Goodman Brown", Nathaniel Hawthorne
"Araby", James Joyce
"The Jilting of Granny Weatherall", Katherine Anne Porter
"A Rose for Emily", William Faulkner
"A & P", John Updike

The 1975 class chose from:

"Dover Beach", Matthew Arnold
"Youth's Progress", John Updike
"Do Not Go Gentle into That Good Night", Dylan Thomas
"A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning", John Donne
"The Unknown Citizen", W.H. Auden

All students were to read all the selections, and then decide which ones to analyze. After illustrating, outlining, and defining close analysis by example, I asked the students to collaborate on written analyses, which were to be presented to the class. The

collaborations were successful, as were the presentations, which were followed by question and answer periods.

One of the aims of the analyses was to show students good literature by example. In this way, they were able to define "good", and to establish criteria for literary excellence, providing them with standards for their own work. Thus, while no one expected to be Faulkner or Donne during one slender session, the criteria[8] the class established as an outgrowth of the reading acted as a firm, realistic guide which encouraged writing discipline.

A new writing assignment was begun with the class book in mind. The activities were simultaneous, and reinforced each other with concrete outcomes. Cooperation was therefore maximized and class spirits were high as the work went forward, spurred by THE DEADLINE.

Both Stained Glass and Dawn is at 5 AM had editors-in-chief, and a treasurer, a business manager, and layout, publicity, advertising, and sales committees. In Stained Glass, each student contributed a story, but because Dawn is at 5 AM was to be a poetry anthology, with many more works accepted, a five person editorial board was formed. This served a critical function while encouraging the qualities of leadership, decision-making, and problem-solving which are fostered by the BOCES III Institute.

Each day thereafter, until press time, the day of THE DEADLINE, class began with a general meeting with the remainder of the hour devoted to committee meetings.

The next two hours were spent in writing and in criticism. Both the short stories and poems made use of sense exercises. Some short stories incorporated more than one sense exercise. Criticism was carried forward in cooperation with other students, with suggestion, open discussion, and conferences with me on particular passages. The acid test was whether or not the story met the criteria. If a criticizing student said it did not, he or she was to give concrete suggestions on the amelioration of the problem. Any story or problem which would not yield to student scrutiny went to me.

Poetry writing sessions made use of opaque projectors, transparencies, and grease pencils. The student poet placed a poem on the transparency while two or three critics stood by. The poem was then analyzed, suggestions were made, and the revision done at once with the grease pencil. Because of poetry's defined visual aspect and its quality of immediacy, if a line is to be rearranged, movement clarified, diction sharpened, it must be done while there is reader reaction and during a young poet's volatile period of creation. Here again, some poems incorporated the sense exercises, which enabled student critics to make knowledgeable suggestions.

The best examples of this method are to be found in Colleen Crawford's "Astride the Bay Stallion",[9] Diane Flemal's "The Music Box",[10] and Megan O'Handley's "untitled poem",[11] all of which grew out of sense training.

In both sessions writing for the class book was followed by a drama unit with a performance of student-written scripts as the outcome.

Drama units began with reading selections tailored to the background, abilities, and preferences of the students. Most of the 1974 class was extroverted, and comedy seemed appropriate. For this group, I chose Moliere's The Misanthrope and Douglas Turner Ward's Happy Ending. The class of 1975 was more serious, with a propensity for introspection, and studied The Misanthrope in conjunction with Sophocles' Antigone. Both class units began with a lecture on history of the theatre and the elements of drama.

Because no two classes are ever alike, it is important for the instructor of the Gifted to stay alert to growth patterns and to be wary of the old habits of students. In 1975 I felt a pervading atmosphere of the desire for safety in the formalized, academic approach to literary analysis and sought to remedy this by means of a writing assignment. Taking on the character of Alceste, students wrote a diatribe condemning any institution

which found disfavor in their eyes: education, government, etc. Some interesting and funny results were obtained with T.V. commercials, the CIA, taxes, and computer printouts.

Each week the Institute's Humanities sessions have a major theme. During the last week it was The Future. I therefore assigned the students plays of the future as group effort projects.

The initial assignment was plot construction. This was an individual assignment and followed discussion of the elements of drama. The class was then divided into groups. It should be emphasized here that I placed the students so that writing ability and personality complemented each other wherever possible. Each group then selected a plot from among individual plots and collaborated on a script.

In most cases, plays were performed for the Institute, with one group electing to conduct a reading. Students were allowed to use any means to communicate; thus, they made use of music, lights, costumes, props, and scenery, drawing on students and teachers from other disciplines when needed.

One of the cleverest plays was a biting, witty, political satire. Based on a plot by Megan O'Handley, 1975, and entitled, A Future Fairy Tale, it utilized toys, a Disneyland backdrop, and Nixon posters to satirize the juxtaposition of our

political scandals and the present deplorable state of the economy.

The narrator begins by saying:

> Hello boys and girls. I'm here to tell you a fairy tale of the future. Once upon a time there was a not too far away land called the United States of Disney. This land was ruled by a man named Sir Frumple-Crumple and his assistant, Chief Howzit. Everybody, almost, was happy sitting around drinking orange crush, eating apple turnovers, and studying the philosophies of Richard Milhouse Nixon. Everybody, that is, except a little girl named Hortense.

At the end, Hortense exposes the false, celluloid society for what it is and everyone lives unhappily ever after in reality except Hortense.

Hortense took her opportunity to expose society by stealing into the "shrine" when no one was looking. In the imagination of this student Hortense is both gifted and fearless. Though she knows the others do not communicate with her, she disregards peer pressure and daily frustration to stand alone.

There is another message in this play, for in our present system Hortense might well be sent back to the confines of her regular class for ten months of each year. There she would most likely underachieve according to her potential and so perpetuate the fairy tales some educators persist in telling themselves.

But like orange crush and apple turnovers, a regular class just keeps a Gifted mind sitting around. More than anything, the Gifted need each other and additional programs. This is just a sample of one of them, and of what can be accomplished.

Carole Schulkind

BOCES III

Suffolk County, L.I., N.Y.

Footnotes

[1]Barbara Zipser, "Beneath the Halo of A Streetlamp", Scholastic Scope, May 8, 1975 p. 20.

[2]See Appendix A

[3]Ibid.

[4]Diane Flemal, "The Music Box", Dawn is at 5 AM, Suffolk County BOCES III, 1975.

[5]Patience Wales, "At Sea in a Circle of Sound", Sail, June, 1975, pp. 83-85.

[6]Carole Schulkind and Barbara Baskin, "Impaled on a Wild Entanglement of Lace; Poetics for the Young Gifted Child", Elementary English, November, 1973, pp. 1209-1214.

[7]Katherine Anne Porter, "The Jilting of Granny Weatherall", An Introduction to Literature, Sylvan Barnet, Morton Berman, and William Burto, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1974, pp. 188-189.

[8]See Appendix C.

[9]Dawn is at 5 AM, p. 42.

[10]Ibid, p. 16.

[11]Ibid, p. 9.

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Barnet, Sylvan, Morton Berman, and William Burto. An Introduction to Literature. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1974. 5th Edition.

Dawn is at 5 AM. Suffolk County, Long Island, New York. Board of Cooperative Educational Services, Third Supervisory District.

Schulkind, Carole and Barbara Baskin. "Impaled on a Wild Entanglement of Lace: Poetics for the Young Gifted Child". Elementary English. November, 1973. pp. 1209-1214.

Stained Glass. Suffolk County, Long Island, New York. Board of Cooperative Educational Services, Third Supervisory District.

Wales, Patience. "At Sea in a Circle of Sound". Sail. June, 1975. pp. 83-85

Zipser, Barbara. "Beneath the Halo of a Streetlamp". Scholastic Scope. May 8, 1975. p. 20.

Appendix A

_____, 1975

Dear _____,

This questionnaire is designed to indicate your background, interests, and special capabilities with a view to fulfilling some of your creative potential during the Institute's sessions. It will help me to plan your individualized reading lists and writing projects which are to be an outcome of the writing section.

Please make two copies, with your initials on the upper right-hand corner of each page. Mail one copy to me within the next few days, keeping the other for your own reference.

I look forward to meeting you, and to a productive summer.

Yours sincerely,

Carole Marks Schulkind

Carole Schulkind Creative Writing Section

Name _____

Address _____

_____

Telephone _____

Date of Birth _____

School _____

Grade _____

Answer the following questions as fully as you wish:

1. How much sense training have you had to date?

2. Do you write regularly? How often?

3. What would you say is your greatest need in writing? (discipline, organization, expression, etc.)

4. Do you write for your school literary magazine or newspaper?

5. Do you attend the theatre and/or poetry readings? How often?

6. Define creative writing as you see it, without any recourse to notes or references of any kind.

7. What do you expect to get from this course? Be specific.

8. Enclose a sample of your writing, any genre.

9. Write a brief autobiography telling who you really are.

10. List at least five authors and titles of works you have read and enjoyed, with a separate page for each genre:

poetry
satire
plays
criticism
novel
short story

BOCES 1975 INSTITUTE FOR TALENTED YOUTH
Creative Writing Section
Carole Schulkind, Instructor

NUTS & BOLTS

1. Keep this in your notebook or envelope.

2. Sign in when you enter the classroom. This will eliminate roll call, which wastes time.

3. Follow your assignments for each day. Consult your calendar to get ahead. This will leave you more time to write.

4. Stay in your assigned group until Day 4, when we will shift into sense groups, with 5 to a group.

5. When we do shift into sense groups, try to avoid being in a group with a friend. The purpose of grouping is stimulation and exchange, and friends usually tend to reinforce each other's opinions. This may be comfortable, but it is not informative.

6. Discuss your progress, findings, and problems with people in other groups as much as possible. Use your telephone list to get together with other people. A variety of reader reactions is bound to improve your writing.

7. Write something in your notebook each day, keeping it as a journal or diary. (See the Diary of Anais Nin.) I will read this only if asked to do so.

8. You will be receiving an individualized reading list during our conference(s). This reading list will be modified from time to time. You will be expected to keep a section of your notebook for informal comments on this reading. Set your own pace for reading, but do not fail to write comments and keep bibliography cards.

9. Early assignment: Clip play reviews and book reviews and keep in separate folder.

10. Purchase: 6 file folders, 1 3x5 file box, 3x5 index cards, 1 large envelope for file folders, 1 notebook.

BOCES Institute for Talented Youth
C. Schulkind, Instructor
Creative Writing

ASSIGNMENT FOR FIRST DAY

Bring a blindfold and as many of the following items as you can:

bells
sponges
paper
rubber bands
balls (tennis, ping-pong, golf)
cellophane (clear, colored)
straws
wood
colored tissue paper
cotton balls
empty paper towel or toilet paper rolls
cologne
flavoring
potato chips
honey
barley
witch hazel
iodine
acorns
mirror
branches
mustard
peanut butter
playing cards
pebbles
rubbing alcohol
blanket
soap
wool
coffee
oranges, lemons, peaches, apricots, bananas, grapes
small musical instruments
pencils
jars (glass, plastic) with covers
shoebox
sandpaper
pennies
flashlight
food coloring
swatches of fabric of different types
empty soda cans
ears of corn (unhusked)
rice
spices
popcorn
pretzels
mothballs
straw baskets
caladryl
gauze bandages
leaves
twigs
flowers (artificial, real)
bread
talcum powder
sand
shells
incense and burner
washcloth
potatoes
rope
tea

Assignment: (Due on Day 2)

1. Write at least ten words or phrases which indicate each of the following senses:

   sight
   touch
   taste
   smell

   Put each group of words or phrases on a separate paper and use as scratch when writing your sense descriptions. The words will act as warm-ups, starting you off.

2. Bring a cushion or pillow, a towel or blanket to leave in class for a few days, and incense or perfume. Wear old clothes.

BOCES 1975 INSTITUTE FOR TALENTED YOUTH
Creative Writing Section
Carole Schulkind, Instructor

Section 1

My file must contain:

1. At least five examples of sense descriptions, one for each sense. More is better.

2. Your sense descriptions, with all criticism and revisions.

3. Scratch copies.

4. Typed final copies, with carbons.

5. Feedback page, consisting of unstructured comments on what was happening to you during Section 1.

BOCES 1975 INSTITUTE FOR TALENTED YOUTH
C. Schulkind, Instructor
Creative Writing Section

Sign In.

Section 1
Sense Training

Day 1

1. Read the literary magazines available in the class. Use other materials as you wish. Record all materials used on bibliography file. These cards will be used in conferences. On a note pad or separate section of your notebook, record reactions to the reading material. Any comments you make might prove useful to you at a future date and will eliminate frustration if you wish to refer to the work again.

   Look for writing, without regard to length, which illustrates awareness of the senses:

   sound
   sight
   touch
   taste
   smell

   Record these. There is no need to copy the material as you will know where to find it.

   As soon as you have found one example of good writing for each sense, look for another, starting with the first sense. Why? Because ------

   The good writing you read
   Will improve your writing
   So
   Your writing becomes
   Good Reading

   Increase this reference material whenever you can and keep good records.

Class time utilized:

1 HOUR Maximum

2. Sense training workshop preparation:

Sound

a. Assemble all items which have potential sound quality on the center table.

b. Think of every sound-descriptive work or phrase you can without regard to grammatical category or order. Write these on a blank sheet of paper. This paper will act as scratch in the writing exercise. It also acts as pre-writing. Some examples of sound descriptive words and phrases:

swish	thud
crackly	burble
high whine	rich tenor
barely audible sigh	thrum

c. Set your tape recorder or cassette if you have one with you.

Class time utilized:

15 minutes maximum

3. Sense training workshop:

a. Reading of sense-related writing

b. Sound-reactive exercises, with use of blindfolds and tape recorder.

Class time utilized:

30 - 45 minutes

4. Write a description, with sound as the focus. It should be 100-500 words in length. As soon as you are satisfied with your description, go to your group section, taking your unfinished reading with you.

Class time utilized:

30 minutes maximum

5. When every person in your group is present, begin to read the descriptions silently. Then, on a cover sheet, write <u>constructive</u> criticism. State good points. Tell where the writing needs improvement. Tell how you think the writer should go about revising. Remember that writing is an extension of one's inner self and that the writer is as sensitive as you are, so be tactful, helpful, and sincere.

Sense Training
Section 1

6. Discuss your criticism with the writer, using other members of the group as sounding boards.

Day 2

1. Reading research and revision in groups as in Day 1.

   Individual conferences will be scheduled. Sign the Conference sheet after you have signed in. You will be called up to my desk for your private conference. Bring all materials, of course.

2. Prepare for sense training workshop as in Day 1. (sight)

3. Sight as central focus---writing.

4. Group work, consisting of revision and individual conferences. Additions will be made to reading lists.

Day 3

1. Sense training workshop---touch, motion.
2. Writing

3. Sense training workshop---taste.
4. Writing

5. Sense training workshop---smell.
6. Writing

Assignment: Bring any two poems you believe to be good to class on Monday.
Make copies for yourself as these will be collected.

Day 4

1. Revision, conferences

2. Group work. Formation of new groups based on senses. (Try to sign up for the group with your strongest sense. Maximum of 4 to a group.)

3. Reading aloud of best papers.

Assignment: Reading of poems from textbook. Titles will be posted on the bulletin board. Copy these as soon as you enter the room and sign in.

Appendix B

Excerpts from Dawn is at 5 AM and Stained Glass

Astride the Bay Stallion

A hearty chest vibrates,
    A silken neck supports
A bristly mane,
    Astride the bay stallion.

A coarse rein grates against my skin.
    A short, swift gallop into the wind,
A lash of tears to my stinging eye
    Astride the bay stallion

A jolting prance onward,
    A nervous, little step causes
A clinging, slimy sweat
    Astride the bay stallion.

A rustling in the bush,
    A pricked ear,
A journey as one
    Astride the bay stallion.

Colleen Crawford
Babylon High School
Long Island, New York

Appendix B

A Midsummer Nightmare

I was late, it was 3:16. As I walked in some distant relatives whose faces reflected their discontent turned to glare. I started explaining how the carwouldn't start but was cut off by the harsh voice of Mr. Garby, the executor of my grandmother's estate. He cleared his throat and shot a piercing sidewards glance toward me. I found myself a seat in the corner of the study. A large overstuffed chair in a brown-grey tweed, it seemed to match the mood of the room. Mr. Garby then slowly, meticulously, shuffled a pile of papers and began reading in a dull monotone.

"This is the last will and testament of Elma Hardyy ... I, Elma Hardyy being of sound mi ..."

His voice faded away slowly, replaced by the ominous ticking of the clock, which rested on a shelf just above my left shoulder. In the background, voices popped in and out of my mind.

"... to my grandson, Robert ..."

"Hey, Bobby, ya wanna play hide and seek?"

My dreams were shattered by the voice of Mr. Garby.

"Miss Silin!"

Obviously embarrassed, I nodded my head. The lawyer went on as if he hadn't been interrupted at all.

"To my granddaughter I leave Melani Mansion."

The reading was at an end, and figures shuffled out of the room leaving me and Mr. Garby. I walked across the waxed marble floor to his desk.

"Here is the deed and your key."

I accepted the white envelope and turned, silently leaving the room. I walked to my car hoping desperately that it would not fail to start as it had before. The key turned, working as a catalyst to start the engine. I sighed with relief. Driving home, I thought of the house. I hadn't been there in years, not since my late great childhood.

"Leslie, bring me my slippers, will you?"

"Sure, Grandma, where are they?"

A tiger leaping. I swerved, nearly hitting a tree. I stopped by the side of the road to reclaim my senses. My childhood fears, which I had long forgotten, were returning. A sudden feeling of helpless fear overcame me.

I knew then that to survive I had to go back to that house to conquer it.

I started the next morning bright and early. Don't they always say the early bird catches the worm? It would be at least a three hour drive to the mansion. I wanted to get there before nightfall. A crisp autumn breeze and a bright, warm sun accompanied me on the journey.

The New England countryside is always spectacular, especially when the leaves are just starting to change color. I took the scenic route which took me through sprawling farmland and quaint towns. By midday I was almost there. I decided to stop for lunch at a place recognized by a large green sign with big orange lettering which read, JOES EATS. The place reminded me of a diner I had seen in a 1930's gangster movie. The food was good old American frozen style. The waitress, an aging housewife, who had her hair tied back in a neat little bun, wore a calico apron. She smiled vaguely as I left. I felt pathos for the women, for the entire town. The loneliness which was their way of life.

The mansion was just a few miles away. Set back on twenty acres of grey forgotten farmland. As I drove up I remembered playing under the apple trees in the heat of summer. The smell of pies set to cool on the kitchen window sill flowed once again through my nostrils causing my mouth to water in anticipation.

It was a good warm feeling, the house bade me welcome. An old friend inviting a weary traveller rest.

A sense of sudden apprehension warned me of unseen danger. I broke out in a cold sweat. I wanted to turn around and run. But I was only drawn closer to the weatherworn house.

***** *****

The key stuck in the rusting lock. After a few moments of jiggling it opened revealing the front hall.

It was just the same as I remembered leaving it when I was 12 years old. Everything was neatly polished and shining. The maid had stayed as a caretaker. I had been forewarned that she would be there at 6:00 the next morning.

It was 4:30 and I decided to get something to eat before I got re-acquainted with the house. I walked down the hall and turned into the large colonial kitchen. It had a 1920 gas stove and one of the first, if not the first Norge refrigerators! I opened it and found half a meatloaf and a note from the maid.

"I hope you enjoy it." signed Mrs. Dunn.

I ate a hasty sandwich and started my exploration.

The house had changed little in 10 years. The rooms still smelled of pine and mothballs. I finished the first floor and went upstairs. Walking down the hall exploring all but one room on the left. I went back downstairs and turned on the T.V. to keep me company. There wasn't anything interesting on, as usual. I soon was sound asleep.

I later awoke to the red and yellow concentric circle test pattern flashing on the screen. I thought I heard a scratching noise upstairs. I was too lazy to get up and investigate so I curled up and resumed my sleep.

***** *****

The morning came late. I woke at 8:30, which is late for me. Mrs. Dunn was humming a popular hit song while she swept the kitchen floor. I got up and went into the kitchen.

"Well hello, Miss Silin! Did you have a good night's sleep?"

"Yes, thank you. You're the housekeeper, Mrs. Dunn, right?"

She just smiled and placed the broom in a corner.

"What would you like to eat?", she asked as she wiped her hands on her fading rose color apron.

"How about some scrambled eggs and bacon?"

She smiled as she spoke showing a set of decayed yellow teeth.

I agreed and was promptly served a true country style meal which I had undeniably missed.

The house took on a new appearance and in the morning light it seemed somehow happier.

I went outside, "for a constitutional", as my grandma would say. I went to the tree where Bobby and me had carved our initials and made secret vows. Now he was married and lived in Utah. I would have to invite him and his family out for a visit once I got the house in order.

When I returned to the house, lunch was on the table. Mrs. Dunn was somewhere upstairs humming the same tune.

As I ate, I decided that after 60 years the house needed redecorating, the sooner the better. I would start with the Trophy room. I had always despised the stuffed remains of animals which once roamed free.

After lunch I went up to the room. The door was closed and a cool draft oozed out of the crack under the door. I clenched the doorknob with numb fingers. It turned, opening the door.

Upon entering, I was greeted by the ceramic tiger whose emerald eyes glistened with mischief. They seemed to stalk me as if they were alive, held captive within the figure. The room was panelled in long, weathered strips of dark teak, shaped by a life left behind in the forest. The floor was a cushion of greengold brocade, thick and plush, letting your feet sink an inch deep. Scattered across the floor were the skins of lions and bears. They had wide gaping mouths with a Taxidermist's faked smile.

Plants of every possible species overflowed. They hung from crevices, hid in vases. They seemed to creep silently awaiting their conquest. The aroma of these exotic plants overcame me. Acting as a potent drug, it mesmerized me into a false state of tranquillity. I became a prisoner, not wishing to leave. I grew aware of something lurking, hidden in the melting shadows. Fear, then darkness.

***** *****

I came to on the living room sofa. Mrs. Dunn stood over me like a mountain against a hazy summer sky, fading in and out of focus.

"Are you alright?"..."How are you?"

I didn't answer. Still in a state of frozen shock. Churning over in my mind what had happened.

Then I remembered the piercing sting, like fire which singed my body, the smell of death, screams of a creature wild with rage. From then on I avoided the room. I even bolted the door to my bedroom when alone at night. The dreams had returned with more intensity. I started to hear unusual noises in the night.

The next morning my girlfriend, Beth Dryst, stopped up to see me. I had forgotten about the invitation I had sent nearly a week ago. Trying to act as normal as possible, I welcomed her in. Before I could say anything, she was already talking a mile a minute in her free flung chattering style.

"The farm is beautiful. I demand a full tour this instant!"

I didn't say a word.

"Hey, what's the matter! Am I too poor for you or something?"

"Oh no, no!" I hadn't intended to ignore her.

"I'm just tired. How was your trip?" My voice was fake and shaky.

"Fine, the country is beautiful!"

"Yes," I agreed. "Would you like something to eat?"

"Would I ever!", she replied.

We walked to the warmth of the kitchen. The atmosphere was less tense and we were soon laughing over some silly joke.

She hadn't given up on the tour idea, however. So, once we finished eating, I started the tour trying to conceal my anxiety.

I planned to skip the Trophy room using the excuse that it had just been painted. This would not work for when we came to it, the door was ajar. A strange hissing noise came from inside. Beth laughed at another good joke, pushing the door open so the entire room was in full view. The room lay deadly still.

"Come on, let's go, lady." I tried to say cheerfully. But Beth had gone over to the ceramic statue and was closely admiring its lifelike qualities.

As she turned to face me, the tiger leaped. I saw Beth, then my sister. We were playing hide and seek. Sue and Bobby and I. Then the tiger leaped.... Sue was dead. Bobby and I made a vow. I wouldn't let it happen again. I grabbed a poker from the fireplace and brought it down upon the beast. Then fell back in shock.

There was Beth's mauled body in a puddle of blood on the floor, broken pieces of glass scattered across the carpet; leaving only the statue's decapitated head in one piece with its cheshire smile to mock me.

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Appendix C

CRITERIA FOR EXCELLENCE IN SHORT STORY WRITING

1. The characters should be believable.
2. The characters must interrelate and serve the story's purpose.
3. The setting must add to the theme or the tone of the story.
4. The theme must be central to the story.
5. The story must be unified.
6. The descriptions (character, setting, sense) should have enough detail to involve the reader.
7. The language (comparisons, diction, symbolism) should be suited to the story's purpose.
8. The point of view should be consistent and beneficial to the artistic whole.

CRITERIA FOR EXCELLENCE IN POETIC EXPRESSION

1. The meter should be well defined and serve an artistic purpose.

2. The tone should convey the meaning of the poem.

3. Diction, sound, and imagery should contribute to the point of the poem.

4. The structure should provide a foundation for the thought.

5. The mood should emphasize the meaning.

6. The themes should be clear.

7. The form (ballad, villanelle, sonnet, etc.) should serve the poem's purpose.

8. The poem should provoke a reaction.